



THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF MALAWI

Malawi operates on an 8-4-4 system:

Primary School	8 years
Secondary School	4 years
University Bachelor's Degree	4 years

Language: The official language of instruction throughout the Malawian educational system is English. Students may study in any of the three major local languages for most of the first four years of primary school after which English becomes the medium. The national language, Chichewa, and other languages like French are taught as classroom subjects through at least the senior year in secondary schools. All textbooks and materials are otherwise in English.

Secondary School: Secondary school education takes four years from Form 1 to Form 4 (9th grade to 12th grade). Students can attend secondary school in public schools run by the government or in private schools run by the private sector, religious bodies and individuals.

Students in secondary schools sit for two major national examinations, a Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) at the end of Form 2 (10th grade) and the Malawi School Certificate of Education Examination (MSCE) at the end of Form 4 (12th grade). Only those who pass the JCE can proceed to Form 3 and ultimately to Form 4. One needs to have passed at least six subjects including English to be awarded a JCE diploma. Unlike the MSCE, the JCE is assigned neither letter grades nor point grades.

Grading System: The MSCE has 9 grades, 1 being the highest and 9 the lowest (fail). To qualify for an MSCE certificate, a student must pass (grades 1-8) English and five other subjects, one of which must be at credit level (grades 1-6).

The Malawi National Examination Board recommends the following equivalence of MSCE grades to the GCSE and GCE grades.

MSCE Grade –Points – GCSE/O-Level Grade

<u>MSCE</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>GCSE/'O' Level</u>
1 & 2	Distinction	A
3 & 4	Credit	B
5 & 6	Credit	C
7	Ordinary Pass	D
8	Ordinary Pass	E
9	Fail	F

Both the JCE and the MSCE exam require a student to take a minimum of six subjects. At MSCE, it is the best six subjects including English that are counted towards the final score. The top score that a student can receive on their MSCE is a 6, simply meaning that a student scored six ones in their best six subjects including English. An MSCE score of 6 points therefore translates into straight 'A's.

Grading for the MSCE is exceptionally tough. Less than 1% of the grades are 6 points or straight A's. Thus B's and C's can be quite competitive grades. MSCE results are also used for selection of candidates for training courses and employment. Students who do very well in MSCE and pass the University of Malawi Entrance Examination are selected into the University of Malawi and its constituent colleges.

University Education:

Selection to University of Malawi (UNIMA) is very competitive and limited by the number of seats or beds. As a result, many well qualified candidates cannot be admitted. UNIMA can only admit 1,000 students every year. In 2007, over 20,000 students sat for MSCE, out of which 11,000 passed and sat for the University Entrance Examinations (UEE). 4,500 students passed UEE and qualified for UNIMA but only 1,000 were admitted due to lack of space. To qualify for UEE, one must be a holder of MSCE, GSCE or other internationally recognized comparable 'O' level certificate with at least six credit passes including English Language.

Selection to UNIMA is also based on the combined score of MSCE or 'O' level equivalent examination and the University Entrance Examinations. Each contributes 50% towards the final aggregate score.

'A' level candidates and International Baccalaureate (IB) candidates with a minimum of 30 points are not required to take University Entrance Examinations. Four international private schools in Malawi offer the Cambridge A-levels and the International Baccalaureate. Qualified students from these schools are eligible for selection into the second year of UNIMA without having to sit for UEE.

The University of Malawi has the following constituent colleges:

1. Chancellor College
2. Bunda College of Agriculture
3. The Malawi Polytechnic
4. Kamuzu College of Nursing
5. College of Medicine

Testing: The SAT is offered 5 times a year at 3 different locations. The GRE is offered 4 times whereas GMAT is not offered at all in Malawi. TOEFL is offered 6 times a year. All these tests are offered as paper based tests in Malawi.

Verification of Documents: The Education Advising center works with Admission Officers in helping to facilitate the verification of academic documents of applicants to US colleges and universities. Unfortunately, the Malawi National Examination Board does not have a website at this time. Thus it is advisable that Admission Officers contact us should they need to verify an applicant's credentials. We can certify documents with the EducationUSA stamp.

Educational Advising: The Educational Advising Center in Lilongwe is sponsored by the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy. It serves over 6,000 students annually. Our job is to provide the most accurate, objective and comprehensive information on higher education in the US and to help Malawian students access such important information. It will be our pleasure to work with you in helping Malawian students who qualify to enroll at your institution. We welcome any chance of receiving your school's catalogue, view book, video and CD – ROM, mailed to:

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